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ABSTRACT

The author contends that certain diagnosis of individual weaknesses or potential learning problems in kindergarten and first grade followed by individualized instruction serves as a preventative measure against reading failure. Since it has been researched that pupil flexibility at school entrance levels lends itself to prescriptive teaching, a concern for teacher preparation is evoked. A brief description of techniques used with basic readers and those used in individualized programing is included. (Author/SBH)

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ABSTRACT

It is offered that certain diagnosis of individual weaknesses or potential learning problems followed by individualized instruction serves as a preventative measure against reading failure. Since it has been researched that pupil flexibilty at school entrance levels lends itself to prescriptive teaching, a concern for teacher preparation is evoked.

A brief description of techniques used with basic readers and those used in individualized programming is included.

The implications for teacher training institutes is implicit.

THE PREPARATION OF KINDERGARTEN AND FIRST GRADE TEACHERS IN THE INSTRUCTION OF SKILLS HELPFUL TO PUPIL READING SUCCESS

The known complexity of reasons underlying reading failure have indicated that early intervention followed by individualized instruction is a better preventative measure against reading failure. "To prevent more serious learning problems from occurring identification of the child with learning disabilities should be made as early as possible." (Haring) "Testing should do more than simply pick out children who are not yet ready for first grade." (deHirsch,1966) The implications for the K and/or first grade teacher is that she should be more attuned to potential learning problems among the pupils and plan instruction according to individual needs. "Effective timing and appropriate use of relevant teaching materials are an educational necessity if the growing percentage of reading failures are to be reduced." (Morgan, 1966)

The kindergarten teacher is able to make a beginning in all aspects of learning that are relevant to the acquisition of reading skills. She can arrange the classroom to motivate word recognition and stimulate verbal fluency. Attention should be given to sequential and consistent practice in:

1. Visual recognition of letter configuration.
2. Discrimination of similarities and differences between letters.
3. Association of letters and their sounds.
4. Discrimination between letter-sounds.
5. Association of sound and the visual discrimination of letter.
6. Identification of letter-sounds at the beginning of words.
7. Identification of letter-sounds at the end of words.
8. Proper use of one syllable words.

Each new step should be introduced by the teacher and further assistance given to those pupils showing need in the acquisition of pre-reading skills.

The problem is addressed to institutions who specialize in teacher training. It is postulated that people going into early childhood teaching need additional training in order 1) to identify potential learning difficulties among the pupil population; and 2) they also need training in preparation of instructional materials developed to overcome diagnosed weaknesses.

A study completed in an urban school district of the increasing number of children who fail in reading, identified that the best moment in which to initiate remediation is at the formative stages of school entrance levels. It is at this moment when the child enters school that he/she should be screened for achievement in those areas of learning relevant to the acquisition of reading skills.

For some time the overall emphasis in most kindergarten and beginning school programs has been on the development of creativity, curiosity, and acceptable group and social behaviors.

With the earlier maturation of today's child it has been found that certain skills related to the acquisition of pre-reading skills may be be taught at the kindergarten or first grade levels without engendering a stressful situation for the young pupil. Bloom (1964) stated that fifty percent of all growth in human intelligence takes place between birth and four years of age. According to Piaget(1966), developing intelligence originates between the sensory-motor and pre-operational stages of growth, that is in the early years. Therefore, if teachers are well prepared in the instruction and diagnosis of potential learning problems, the young child can be prepared for reading success in later grades.

Usually, failure to cope with these skills has not been considered serious at the K level, but is it? We believe that it is.

The teacher should be trained to test all pupils with both standardized tests and teacher made check lists. She/he should also be able to compile anecdotal records as well as cumulative behavioral patterns of activity.

The teacher must be able to observe and record accurate descriptions of each pupils behavior in relation to classroom objectives and use of materials; that is, how does he sit, use pencil, look at and handle worksheets.

Does he have persistent behavior patterns such as being over anxious to please: or does he have obvious negative responses?

The teacher should be familiar with the home situation and the pupil's adaptive behavior, such as peer relations.

More emphasis should be given to instruction in auditory-visual training; discrimination of letter-configuration, in sequential steps.

Beginning with letter-sounds, using the vowel as a pivot in a left to right sequence, words may be developed by adding the final consonant. This method eliminates confusion for the slow learning child.

In the past, many students who were not prepared for the acquisition of reading skills were erroneosly categorized as retarded. Others developed emotional blocks to learning. It is with the hope to eliminate these erroneous categorizations that this author pleads for the review of preparation in teacher training institutes to allow for more specific experience in the skills necessary for later success in reading.

From earlier research it was established that there is a need for additional training in <u>listening skills</u> at the school entrance level.

Described below is a comparison between methods in common use by major reading series and those used in individual tutoring at the school entrance level.

1. Alphabet Names vs. Sounds: Usually letter-names are taught first. In the study, the sound associated with each letter such as "p" - the "puffing" sound; "m" - the "humming" sound, is taught first.

2. Word Clue vs. Mouth Set: It is common practice to teach letters or consonants by aligning them with pictured words. It is preferable to introduce the letter or consonant by the mouth set which produces that sound. In learning the letter configuration in association with stimuli the "m" would be drawn or superimposed on a pair of lips pressed together lightly.

3. Word Clue vs. Isolation: Major reading series use a deductive approach with the letter-sound heard from a word clue. This is difficult for slow learners who have a problem transferring the initial consonant sound from "mice" to "mother". So, letter-sounds are taught in isolation, by sound name and auditory visual clues until they are readily identifiable by the pupil. When this step is attained the initial consonant is then used with a multiple selection of words beginning with "m".

4. No Clue vs. Visual Clue, in the development of auditory discrimination: Commonly taught by repetition, it is noted that in cases of auditory deficiency visual

4. continued

assistance should precede the auditory response. Visual channels provide a concrete basis for producing speech sounds.

5. Inconsistent vs. Consistent Sequence Patterns: The linguistic base for one-syllable words is presented in random order. The pupil may be asked to identify the middle, final or initial sound in any order. In the step by step approach consonants are taught in the initial position until easily identified, then blended with a vowel adding final consonant last in a strict left-to-right sequence.

6. Intermingling vs. Discrete grouping of consonants and vowels: It is preferred to teach ALL consonants first in the initial position, then with a vowel as a pivot, adding a final consonant only after the first two steps are readily identified. The left-to-right sequential order is maintained.

7. Word Clue vs. Word Clue and Gesture: The pupil says the whole word and repeats word stopping himself with a gesture after saying the vowel. This helps him to "hear" and identify the vowel sound and helps recognition of vowel sounds in other words.

8. Memory for Vowel Sounds: Without vs. With Stimuli. With stimuli the vowels are color coded and aligned with word clues.

9. Blending: Without vs. With Support. Blending has often been assumed learned by saying the sounds fast. It is a difficult skill and the pupil receives better support if the vowel is first combined with a consonant that is a continuant such as m, f, n, etc. Then, using a chart combine other consonants by means of rhyming, adding plosives last.

10. Complex vs. Simple Rules for Vowels: The use of vowels is simplified into one rule for one syllable words, which is "When there is one vowel it is usually short; when there are two vowels the first has its alphabet name."

All children should have some practice in auditory discrimination (music can be useful), auditory memory, auditory integration, and auditory-visual integration, in early childhood programs. Along with exposure to alternate methods of pre-phonic training, there may be beneficial results from modification of the teacher's learning preference. Positive reinforcement and behavior modification techniques also need to be studied and applied. Most programs now included the I.E.P. which can be enhanced if the teacher is accomplished in developing the group lesson with time for individualized practice and work sheets.

The supposition that pupils with diagnosed weak areas can be helped if given sequential and individualized assistance at each new step in the acquisition of pre-reading skills was substantiated(Marko, 1977)

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